

New York Debutantes' Charity Work Now of National Scope

The Junior League, Which Was Organized Twenty Years Ago by Miss Mary Harriman, Now Has Branches in Every Large City in the United States and Recently Has Crossed the Line Into Canada. Social Standing Alone Is Not a Qualification for Membership. Must Undergo Probationary Training



MRS. S. VANDERBILT WEBB, president of the Junior League of New York

By Howard L. White

WHEN Miss Mary Harriman, now Mrs. Charles Cary Rumsey, daughter of the late E. Henry Harriman and Mrs. Harriman, conceived the idea of forming an organization of debutantes of 1901 to do charitable work in a systematic and practical manner, and started the Junior League, neither she nor any one else could have realized at the time that it would become in a few years international in its scope.

Such, however, is the result of her initial efforts, and the league now has organizations in thirty-two cities in this country and stretches across the border into Canada, Montreal now having a body of society women organized into a Junior League. From its small beginning, when Miss Harriman and her aids started doing organized philanthropic work, it has now become one of the largest influences of its kind in the world.

For Social Service Work

All the leagues in the various cities have been formed practically for the same purpose as the New York one, which in general is of a social service nature, and it is surprising to an outsider to learn of the valuable work these organizations have accomplished, not only for their pet charities, but for all forms of philanthropy—the Red Cross, the Hoover committees, etc. In fact, the members of the league, in addition to their own work, constantly are called upon for assistance by local and national institutions.

There is now a Junior League in every large city in the country, and the one in Montreal is only the forerunner of similar ones to be established in other large cities in our neighbor to the north. It is safe, therefore, judging from the rate of growth in the past, to predict that in a few years this body of young women will become the most powerful and far-reaching organization of society women—whose motto is "to serve"—to be found in this or any other country.

The growth has been marvelous, for from some thirty members in 1901, the membership here in New York alone has expanded to 1,370 determined and conscientious women, who must work or find themselves dropped from the rolls. The amount of charitable aid rendered among all classes of the more unfortunate has been beyond belief, and the money raised by the New York organization alone for its work has run into the hundreds of thousands.

Raise Money by Plays

One of the principal means of raising money is through the annual theatrical entertainment arranged, staged and produced by members of the league. The performances always have brought much credit to the members of the cast, and some of the young women in the past have shown great possibilities in a theatrical way. So entertaining are these affairs that there always is a great demand for seats and much money is raised. One year the entertainment cleared over \$20,000. This beats even the best year of the Charity Ball.

The annual production takes place in either February or March and has been given since 1901, with the exception of the war years, 1917, 1918 and the winter following the armistice, 1919. It was resumed last winter, however, with "Musical Milestones," bringing back to memory the popular songs of years ago. It was a brilliant and creditable performance. This year's production takes place Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of this week



MISS ADELAIDE KIP RHINELANDER, who will have a part in this week's entertainment

and is called "Musical Chairs." It will consist of songs, dances and episodes, with Miss Grace Henry, who has been active in the organization for years, in charge of the staging, rehearsing and general details of the production. She did valuable work abroad during the war in arranging entertainments for the soldiers and is well qualified to carry through successfully any amateur theatricals.

With the attention of the public being drawn to this annual production this week, a history of the league just now is timely and interesting, for few realize what progress has been made by the organization, how far-reaching it has become and what a power for good it is not only in New York, but in the country at large. It illustrates what a body of determined young society women, bent on other things than mere social obligations, can accomplish in a few years. What has been done has meant much work and shows that society girls, as some think, are not bent merely on fitting about from noon until early the next morning from luncheons to receptions, from dinners to the theater and opera and from there to dances, midnight suppers and early morning breakfasts, with no time for anything but their own pleasure.

Work for the Buds

Miss Harriman was attending Barnard when she made her debut in 1901, and in her study of social conditions she decided that there was a way in which she and her girl friends, "buds" of that season, could do some practical welfare work. She gathered these girls about her, talked the matter over, planned a campaign and the result was the organization of the Junior League for the Betterment of the New York College Settlement.

Officers were elected and work begun immediately. Miss Harriman was made chairman (there was no president in those days); Miss Nathalie Henderson, now Mrs. Joseph R. Swan, vice-chairman; Miss Mary D. Lee, now Mrs. Outbridge Horsey, treasurer, and Miss Rosalie Moran, now Mrs. Edward S. Knapp, secretary. That winter the first entertainment was given, and was a great success.

The organization next became known as the Junior League for the Promotion of the Settlement Movement, and in 1907 the constitution was revised and it became known as the Junior League for Neighborhood Work. In 1912 the constitution again was changed, and it became the Junior League of the City of New York, Inc., which name it has since retained.

The New York organization had been in existence for several years before any other city came in. Boston followed with a similar organi-

zation, about 1909; Philadelphia came in next and the others followed in rapid succession. At first, as the league was spreading, conventions were held once in two years, but now they take place annually, the latest one having been held in Montreal early this month.

The delegates to this from New York were Mrs. Vanderbilt Webb, of the New York league, and Miss Marjorie Cleveland. Reports were read from the various organizations, work for the year talked about and a decision reached to hold the next convention at Atlanta. The first convention was held in Boston, the second in Chicago, the third in Philadelphia, and others followed in Baltimore, Cleveland and St. Louis. There is no president of the national organization, but the head of the league in the city in which the convention is to be held becomes the hostess president.

Work of the League

At the recent convention held in Montreal reports were read which gave a good idea of the large field covered by the different leagues. One showed a system in Georgia of supplying poor children attending schools with the necessary textbooks and the institution of a school library which gives these children the free use of books necessary to continue their education. Members of the Cincinnati league reported activity on behalf of crippled children, providing motor transport to the schools and visiting school children and hospitals where they have constituted a free library for patients. Other activities are training of blind girls and participation in the Girl Scout movement.

Chicago reported the league in that city had concentrated its efforts

THE Jewel of Asia group from "Musical Milestones," given last year by the Junior League

for the most part on forming an auxiliary committee of the national organization for public health nursing. The league of New York concentrated on the support of day and night shelter for children. Under this scheme children in need of shelter are boarded with responsible persons and placed in boarding homes under the supervision of a doctor and nurse.

A part of the session was devoted to a discussion on volunteer workers and a much needed increase of a sense of responsibility. The object is to make the volunteer workers as proficient as professional workers. Members of the various branches took part in the discussion, describing their system of voluntary work and the results attained.

An interesting discussion took part at one of the sessions as to whether members of the league should take part in political matters, especially relating to women and children, such as health, education and child welfare. Leagues were recommended to inform themselves on all civic matters by engagement of good speakers.

Into Health Work

Since its beginning twenty years ago, the Junior League of New York has made much progress in studying and aiding in the problems of the public schools, the settlements and the health conditions in the crowded districts. In 1905 a district nurse was supported by the league in the college settlement to look after the health of residents; in that neighborhood and later in the year another nurse was installed in the district south of Washington Square.

Another important activity which practically was pioneered by the Junior League was the work of the visiting teachers in 1907 and 1908 with the approval of the Public Education Association.

In 1909 the league purchased stock in the City and Suburban Homes Company to build a model tenement house for working girls, which is now called the Junior League Hotel, located at Seventy-eighth Street and the East River. It is self-supporting.

Must Serve a Probation

Membership in the league means something more than social standing, for more than one applicant or provisional member has been turned down at the end of her probationary term because she did not measure up to the work set for her to do. There is a system of checking up on the various committees, and if a girl is found to be taking the work lightly and treating it as secondary to her social life she is dropped at the end of the one or two year term. In other words, the members are made to realize from the first that in order to remain in good standing they must do work of an uplifting nature in return for what they get out of membership in the league.

There is a high standard set. Formerly membership was limited to debutantes of the season, but this has long since passed, and now members are taken in from the different sets, married women being admitted, and members from other leagues moving to New York are received into membership and given the full privileges of the organization. No girl can become an active member unless she demonstrates her will-

ingness and ability to be active for others.

For Civic Betterment

The constitution of the Junior League of the City of New York, Inc., is made up of seven articles and twenty-one by-laws. The purpose is to develop the ability of its members in the interest of good citizenship and to relate those abilities to the community as a whole. The membership consists of five classes, active, provisional, sustaining and honorary, and the control and executive power of the league is vested in a board of managers and officers, who shall be twenty years of age and over. The officers are a president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer, and the board of managers consists of twenty-one members, including the officers of the league and the chairmen of the standing committees. They assume office on June 1 and hold for a year, or until their successors are elected. An annual meeting is held on the last Thursday of each year, and special meetings are called by the president at her discretion or on the written request of five members of the board.

The annual dues for active, provisional and sustaining members are \$15 and for life members \$200. Provisional members are those who before being eligible to active membership shall be required to take one of the prescribed Junior League training courses, which may be completed in one year, but must be finished by the end of the second year unless extension of time is granted in particular cases by the committee on training courses. Provisional members may be elected to active membership when in the judgment of the committee on train-



GROUP of members of the Junior League who took part in last year's play, "Musical Milestones"



PHOTO BY PACH BROS.



MRS. CHARLES CARY RUMSEY, founder of the Junior League

committees, house, committee on arts and interests, athletics, etc.

The committee on training courses recommends to the board, before the September meeting, courses to be required of provisional members. It is responsible for the carrying out of these. It also makes recommendations in regard to the admission to active membership of all provisional members who have taken one of the specified courses.

The duty of the members of the Visiting Teachers Committee is to provide volunteers to work in connection with the public schools along lines approved by the board of managers.

The Hospitals and Public Health Committee assists and cooperates with hospitals, the district nurse and other public health agencies and authorities. The Settlements Committee provides volunteers to take classes in the settlements and cooperates with the local organizations in whatever way seems possible.

A Home of Their Own

The members of the league up to the last few years used to meet at the private homes of the members, but as the organization grew this was found impracticable and club-rooms were found at 6 East Forty-fifth Street. An entire floor is used, and here the members gather to discuss the work of the various committees, to plan for the future of the organization and to listen to debates and lectures on welfare work and other subjects. The rooms are artistically furnished, and the secretary or her assistant is always on hand to answer questions and take care of the routine work of the club and to look after applicants for positions. This is a new field and is a sort of clearing house for the members desiring to enter the business or professional world. They seek and are given advice as to the best place to which to go and the best person to see in the particular field in which they are seeking a career.

Dr. Manning Contributes

In the February number, "Bachelors and Benedicts," is an editorial by Bishop-elect Manning. It reads as follows:

"The Junior League has in many ways unusual value as an organization. In the first place, it has social value, using the word in its simplest sense. It should promote the spirit of fellowship and comradeship among its members, and whatever tends to interest us in others and to keep us in human touch with them is mutually helpful and enlarging to our own lives.

"But beyond this the Junior League has a great opportunity for service. It also has a special obligation in this regard. Many of its members have time at their own disposal. All of them have exceptional advantages of education and association. Such advantages impose on us the obligation of service to others. And the word service contains the secret of real happiness in this life. God has so made us that we cannot be happy unless we are of use to others. We find our deepest satisfaction and pleasure in useful work.

"The present activities of the league show that in large measure its members are realizing this. The committees on which its members are working show a wide range of sympathy and of practical service. Nothing could be more important than the development of such a spirit in those who are to hold places of influence in the community.

"May the New Year bring to every member of the Junior League much of that highest of all human happiness which is found in giving some real help to others."

MISS HELEN TREVOR, who will appear in one of the dances in "Musical Chairs"

ing courses they shall have satisfactorily completed one of the prescribed courses.

Life Memberships

After two years of active membership in the league the members are entitled to life membership on the payment of \$200, and thereafter they are exempt from annual dues. They retain the rights and duties of active members until they become sustaining members. That is when they reach the age of forty. As such they receive the annual reports, The Bulletin, etc., and are entitled to the privileges of the club. They are not eligible, however, for election to the board of managers.

Active or sustaining members with a record of useful service in any branch of league work may be elected honorary members by the vote of the board of managers. They are exempt from dues.

To become a provisional member of the league does not require merely social standing. A candidate must be proposed and seconded by a member, who must be responsible for securing three additional letters of recommendation from league members. No member of the board of managers can act as a proposer or seconder or write letters of recommendation. If the name of the candidate is favorably passed by the committee on admission the name shall be presented to the board of managers for election at the next meeting. At such meeting the candidate is voted upon and elected unless two or more votes are cast against her name.

To become an active member the candidate must have satisfactorily completed one of the required training courses. If a candidate has not previously been a provisional member she must be proposed and seconded by a member of the league, and if the previous training and experience of the candidate is deemed equivalent to the training courses she is recommended for election.

The Standing Committees

Nothing could be written which would more clearly show the wide scope covered by the league in its philanthropic work than a list of the standing committees. They include a Visiting Teachers Committee, a Hospital and Public Health Committee, a Settlements Committee, a Charity Organization Society Committee, a Junior League Hotel Committee, a Players Committee and a Bulletin Committee. In addition to these there are the usual committees of finance, membership, admissions, training courses. The chairmen of these committees are elected by the league at the annual meetings and are members of the board of managers. Then there are standing club